

Exhibit A

**UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
FOR THE NORTHERN DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA**

NEETA THAKUR, et al.,

Plaintiffs,

v.

DONALD J. TRUMP, et al.,

Defendants.

No. 3:25-cv-4737

DECLARATION OF MICHAEL MCDONALD

I, Michael McDonald, hereby declare under penalty of perjury:

1. I am the Acting Chairman of the National Endowment for the Humanities (“NEH”).
2. President Trump appointed me to the Acting Chairman position on March 10, 2025.
3. I have worked at NEH since May 2003 in a variety of positions including Deputy General Counsel, General Counsel, Assistant Chairman for Programs, and Acting Deputy Chairman.
4. Congress created NEH in 1965 within the executive branch of the federal government to support research, education, preservation, and public programs in the humanities.
5. In the statute creating NEH, Congress authorized the NEH Chairperson – and only the NEH Chairperson – to enter contracts, grants, loans and other forms of assistance to carry out the agency’s humanities functions.
6. President Trump issued Executive Order 14151, *Ending Radical And Wasteful Government DEI Programs and Preferencing* on January 20, 2025; Executive Order 14173,

Ending Illegal Discrimination and Restoring Merit-Based Opportunity issued on January 21, 2025; and Executive Order 14168, *Defending Women from Gender Ideology Extremism and Restoring Biological Truth to the Federal Government* on January 20, 2025, when Shelly C. Lowe was still Chair of NEH.

7. Between January 20 and February 7, 2025, Chair Lowe directed NEH program staff to review open grants in light of the new Executive Orders.

8. At the direction of then-Chair Lowe, on February 7, 2025, NEH's Chief Information Officer ("CIO") Brett Bobley emailed NEH program directors asking them to identify projects funded under the Biden Administration that might be implicated by President Trump's Executive Orders.

9. Between February 7 and March 16, 2025, CIO Bobley created a system for staff to mark Biden-era projects on spreadsheets as either "High, Medium, Low, or No Connection" in terms of the Executive Orders and communicated this to NEH program directors.

10. During this same time frame, NEH program directors worked on filling in the spreadsheets with their individualized assessment of each grant's connection to the President's Executive Orders.

11. On March 10, 2025, President Trump terminated NEH Chair Lowe and appointed me to be Acting Chairman of NEH.

12. On or about March 12, 2025, representatives from the Department of Government Efficiency ("DOGE"), Justin Fox and Nate Cavanaugh, contacted NEH to discuss and advise me on implementing the President's priorities as stated in the Executive Orders, including terminating grants that a reasonable person could deem to violate the Executive Orders.

13. On March 17 – 18, 2025, I worked with NEH Assistant Chairman for Programs Adam Wolfson to conduct a further individualized review of the spreadsheets of open grants created by program staff.

14. On March 19, 2025, NEH CIO Bobley sent NEH Assistant Chair for Planning and Operations Pranita Raghavan a final spreadsheet containing only those projects that I and Mr. Wolfson deemed to conflict with President Trump’s Executive Orders.

15. On March 20, 2025, Ms. Raghavan transmitted this list to the Office of Management and Budget (“OMB”) as directed by the Presidential Executive Orders.

16. On March 26, 2025, Mr. Wolfson and I reviewed additional spreadsheets of grants that included those the program directors had initially listed as having no connection to the President’s Executive Orders.

17. On March 31, 2025, I sent NEH’s DOGE contacts, Mr. Fox and Mr. Cavanaugh, the final results of NEH’s review in which we identified grants that did not appear to us to be in conflict with the Trump Administration’s priorities.

18. On or about April 1 – 2, 2025, I terminated a number of, but not all, open NEH grants in compliance with Presidential Executive Order 14222 and in consultation with DOGE.

19. The April termination emails were carried out pursuant to Executive Order 14222, *Implementing the President's “Department of Government Efficiency” Cost Efficiency Initiative* issued on February 26, 2025. The grant termination emails mistakenly referenced Executive Order 14217, *Commencing the Reduction of the Federal Bureaucracy*, issued on March 14, 2025, and should have referenced Executive Order 14222.

20. As noted above, the policy for selecting grants for termination at NEH focused first on first on identifying open grants that focused on or promoted (in whole or in part)